Problem-Solving Treatment (PST) Information for Patients

What to Expect

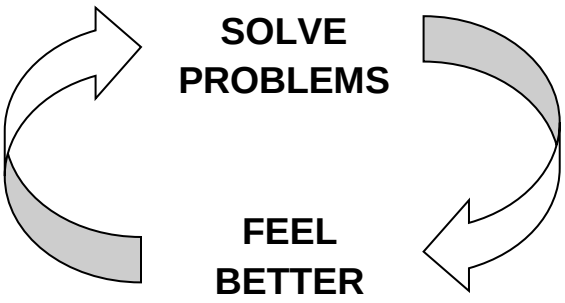
- Brief duration (6-8 sessions)
- Practical and focused on current, real-life problems
- Therapist teaches technique; you solve your own problems

How It Works

- Depression can be caused by problems in life
- PST helps you get control over the problems in your life
- Regaining control over problems improves mood (depression) and helps you feel better

Depression is common. We all encounter problems in our lives, big and small, every day. It's a normal part of living. If we let problems pile up we can become overwhelmed and that can lead to depression. People who are depressed can learn effective ways of dealing with their problems and feel better as a result.

We almost always have some control over our problems. If we're able to tackle problems as they come up, we are less likely to become or stay depressed. A depressed mood can be a signal that there are problems that need attention and we can use this as a cue to take action. Stop and think: What problem might be troubling me? Once you know what the problems are, you can put your problem-solving skills to work and begin to feel better.



When we don't solve our problems, we feel bad. When we work on solving our problems, we feel better, and when we feel better we can work on solving more problems.

Problem-solving treatment is a logical and organized way of sorting out problems and difficulties. If you learn how to problem-solve you can feel better. Problem-solving treatment has helped many people to not have depression anymore. In problem solving treatment, the therapist explains how the treatment will work and encourages and supports you. However, you come up with ideas and carry out your plans. Problem-solving skills can be useful now and when problems come up in the future.

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Problem-Solving Treatment Has 7 Steps

1. **Write down a clear description of one problem to work on.**
   What is the problem about? When does the problem occur? Where? Who is involved? Try to break up difficult problems into smaller ones and think about each one by itself.

2. **Set a goal that you think is possible.**
   What would you like to happen? Choose a clear goal that you can achieve. The goal helps to solve the problem you selected.

3. **Brainstorm solutions.**
   List as many solutions as you can think of. Don't rule anything out. Don't worry about which solution is best; you'll look at that later. Consider what has worked in the past for you or for others.

4. **Think about the advantages and disadvantages (pros and cons) for each possible solution.**
   What would be good about each solution? What might be hard about each one? Think about the effort, time, money, and impact on you and others.

5. **Choose the solution that seems best.**
   Which solution seems like it would be the easiest to do and has the smallest impact on your time, effort, money, or other people's effort?

6. **Make an action plan for your solution.**
   Write down exactly what you will do and when you will do it. Plan out what you need to do and prepare to set yourself up for success.

7. **Review your progress.**
   What worked or what didn't work? Make changes if something didn't work. How has trying to solve your problems helped your mood?

Problem-solving may not solve all of your problems, but it can teach you a way to deal with them. As you begin to feel like you have more control over your problems, your mood can improve.

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Why Pleasant Activities Are Important

When people get depressed they don't feel like doing things they usually enjoy. When they do fewer things they enjoy they begin to feel even worse. As they feel worse, they do even less, and they get caught up in a vicious cycle of doing less and less and feeling worse and worse.

As part of problem-solving treatment we will help you set a goal of doing at least one activity you like each day. In other words, we will help you give yourself a "treat" each day. We call these pleasant activities. Sometimes you can start to learn problem-solving skills by working on the problem of not having enough enjoyable activities in your life.

Some benefits of pleasant activities are:

1. You can use problem-solving steps to help increase your pleasant activities.
2. You will start to have control over your life in a positive and helpful way.
3. Doing pleasant things will help motivate you to solve some of the harder problems in your life.

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